

Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SREF EAID AO

SUBJECT: ANGOLA AIRLIFT - DETENTION OF WORLD AIRLINES PERSONNEL

1. DURING THE EARLY MORNING HOURS OF OCTOBER 26, WORLD AIRWAYS EMPLOYEES ROBERT AUSTIN AND JOHN WEGG WERE DETAINED BRIEFLY BY THE ARMED FORCES OF THE MPLA. APPARENTLY BECAUSE THEY HAD STEPPED OFF THE TARMAC INTO A DARKENED AIRPLANE PARKING AREA, AUSTIN AND WEGG AROUSED THE SUSPICIONS OF A SQUAD OF MPLA MILITARY GUARDS AT THE AIRPORT. ONE OF THE SOLDIERS INSISTED THAT THEY WERE TAMPERING WITH THE DOOR OF A NORD-ATLAS (WHICH THEY DENIED) AND THAT THIS WAS REASON TO SUSPECT THEM OF HIJACKING INTENTIONS. PROLONGED EFFORTS TO PERSUADE THE MPLA SOLDIERS THAT THEY WERE MISTAKEN DID NOT SUCCEED NOR DID AN EFFORT BY A PORTUGUESE ARMY OFFICER TO CHALLENGE THE AUTHORITY OF THE SOLDIERS TO MAKE ARRESTS WITHIN THE AIRPORT. CONSEQUENTLY, WEGG AND AUSTIN WERE LOADED INTO A LAND ROVER AND TAKEN TO THE MPLA MILITARY HEADQUARTERS FOR INTERROGATION. AFTER SOME INITIAL CONFUSION THERE, WEGG AND AUSTIN FINALLY WERE INTERVIEWED BY AN OFFICER WHO APPEARED TO BE RESPONSIBLE

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FOR SECURITY MATTERS. AFTER HEARING THE REPORT OF THE ARRESTING

SOLDIERS, AND BRIEFLY QUESTIONING WEGG AND AUSTIN, THE OFFICER INSTRUCTED THE SOLDIERS TO TAKE WEGG AND AUSTIN BACK TO THE AIRPORT AND TO RELEASE THEM. THE ENTIRE INCIDENT LASTED LESS THAN THREE HOURS, AND NEITHER WEGG NOR AUSTIN WAS PHYSICALLY MISTREATED DURING THEIR BRIEF DETENTION. FSO LOWELL KILDAY WAS WITH THEM THROUGHOUT AND WAS INSTRUMENTAL IN OBTAINING THEIR PROMPT RELEASE.

2. THIS WAS ESSENTIALLY A CASE OF OVER-ZEALOUSNESS BY MPLA TROOPS. WEGG AND AUSTIN DID NOTHING TO WARRANT ARREST OR EVEN TO AROUSE SUSPICIONS. HOWEVER, THE ARRESTING SOLDIERS APPARENTLY HAD STRICT ORDERS TO PREVENT THE HIJACKING OF ADDITIONAL AIRPLANES. THREE TAAG PLANES HAVE BEEN HIJACKED TO DATE AND MPLA IS DETERMINED TO HANG ON TO THE REST OF THE PLANES STILL IN ITS HANDS. THE MERE PRESENCE OF TWO FOREIGNERS IN AN AIRPLANE PARKING AREA PROVIDED THEM WITH THE OPPORTUNITY TO DISPLAY THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THEIR VIGIL. DECON UPON RECEIPT.
KILLORAN

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